

## Background Characters in the Old Testament Lesson 9 4Q 2010

From a listener, Gillian, in Canada I received the following this week:

Hi Dr Tim,

I was listening to the current lesson about Uriah and David and the question was asked "if David was forgiven why was he not allowed to build the temple(paraphrasing)" The answer is quite simple God did not intend to live in a temple he wanted to be in the tent where he could be among the people and he would not be seen as God only of Israel but available to all nations. It was David's guilt(?) after he had acquired so much wealth and had built himself a majestic palace, then he saw the tent that the Lord dwelt in he decided to give God a better idea. This happened in 2 Sam 7 before he committed adultery and murder. I hope you can clear this up for you class as many people believe that this was David's punishment from God.

Rizpah: The Influence of Faithfulness

SABBATH

Read memory text – thoughts? Any questions?

What is faithfulness? Last two sentences of the second paragraph state: “faithfulness is not conditioned by circumstances or good (or bad) fortunes. Faithfulness is an unconditional commitment to do what’s right regardless of the cost.”

What do you think about this? I like it – to do what is right regardless of the cost.

Could it be this, a question of faithfulness, is the very heart of the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan?

But what if some of them were not faithful? Does this mean that God will not be faithful? Certainly not! God must be true, even though every human being is a liar. As the scripture says,

“You must be shown to be right when you speak; you must win your case when you are being tried.”<sup>1</sup>

What did the war in heaven start over? Was it not a question of God’s faithfulness, God’s trustworthiness? Was God not the one alleged to be unfaithful to His creatures? And therefore distrust of God infected the hearts of some of the angels and then mankind?

Therefore, God is working to free us from such misconceptions and restore us back to trust in Him!

How do we determine what the right is? What is our standard of right and wrong?

If our definition of right originates in God would it be important for one to have the true knowledge of God? What might happen if someone accepts distorted concepts of God?

Could someone be faithful to the wrong cause – do what they thought was right, but in actuality do wrong? Did Saul of Tarsus do what he thought was right by persecuting the church? Was it right?

What is the right thing to do in a given situation? When in doubt think “love”, what can I do to honor God, what can I do to bless the other person. This might mean keeping silent, it might mean turning the other cheek, it might mean speaking out, it might mean defending oneself, holding someone accountable, calling the authorities, giving a spanking etc.

The right course of action is the course in which we love God and love others. Thoughts?

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<sup>1</sup> American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible : The Good news Translation* (2nd ed.) (Ro 3:3–4). New York: American Bible Society.

What is the sealing?

Just as soon as the people of God are sealed in their foreheads--it is not any seal or mark that can be seen, but a settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they cannot be moved--just as soon as God's people are sealed and prepared for the shaking, it will come. FLB 287.

Would sealing mean people have been changed to the point they are "faithful," that they will do what is right no matter the cost?

SUNDAY

Rizpah was a concubine of King Saul, who became part of the royal house of Saul's son Ishbosheth after Saul died. Ishbosheth was set up by Abner to rule over Israel in opposition to David.

The lesson explains concubines were females taken from the rank of slaves or maids, with the express purpose of producing heirs. Once they had a male offspring they had a status similar to a tertiary wife.

Thoughts about this practice? Do we find this practice occurring only among those who didn't know God or who were God's enemies?

Who had concubines?

- Abraham
- Israel (Jacob)
- Gideon
- Saul
- David
- Solomon

Do we find God gave instructions, through Moses, on how concubines were to be treated, and their children?

<sup>15</sup> If a man has two wives, and he loves one but not the other, and both bear him sons but the firstborn is the son of the wife

he does not love, <sup>16</sup> when he wills his property to his sons, he must not give the rights of the firstborn to the son of the wife he loves in preference to his actual firstborn, the son of the wife he does not love. <sup>17</sup> He must acknowledge the son of his unloved wife as the firstborn by giving him a double share of all he has. That son is the first sign of his father's strength. The right of the firstborn belongs to him. <sup>2</sup>  
 (see also Exodus 21:7-11, DT 21:10-14).

Do we find God tells them not to have concubines? Then, does this mean it is God's will and okay?

Do we find a practice, engaged in by God's faithful followers, codified by God's prophets, blessed by God - as children of such relationships were part of forming the 12 tribes of Israel, to still be wrong?

If we find something in scripture, which occurred, which had prophetic involvement/instructions, and which God blessed, does that automatically mean it is right, good or in harmony with God's will?

Some other Scripture which sheds light on this:

- Another thing you do: You flood the Lord's altar with tears. You weep and wail because he no longer pays attention to your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands. <sup>14</sup> You ask, "Why?" It is because the Lord is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant. <sup>15</sup> Has not the Lord made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth. <sup>16</sup> "I hate divorce," says the Lord God of Israel, "and I hate a man's covering himself with violence as well as with his garment,"

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<sup>2</sup> *The Holy Bible : New International Version*. 1996 (electronic ed.) (Dt 21:15-17). Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

says the Lord Almighty. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith. Mal 2:13-16

- “Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’<sup>5</sup> and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’?<sup>6</sup> So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.” Mt 19:4-6.
- Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach. 1Tim 3:2

Thoughts?

Keep this idea in mind, that we can find practices in Scripture, done by God’s people, even sometimes codified and blessed by God that are still wrong.

Why? Because God meets people where they are, works with them in their understanding and leads them as fast as they can move toward His methods and principles. Behavioral adherence is not what God wants. He could get this quickly, what He wants is agreement, changed hearts where we want to do it His way. This takes time.

MONDAY

Ishbosheth accuses Abner of sleeping with Rizpah and this so offends Abner that he changes loyalty and goes to David offering to bring the rest of Israel under David’s rule.

This accusation is so serious because to sleep with a king’s concubine is tantamount to usurping the throne and claiming all the king’s rights, property, position, and authority. So, if Abner had done this he would have been saying I am sovereign and this is what Ishbosheth accused him of.

## TUESDAY

Read 2Samuel 21:1-10:

During the reign of David, there was a famine for three successive years; so David sought the face of the Lord. The Lord said, “It is on account of Saul and his blood-stained house; it is because he put the Gibeonites to death.”

The Gibeonites, also known as Hivites, were descendants of Canaan son of Ham and were one of the seven nations which were to be destroyed when Israel conquered Canaan. However, the Gibeonites presented themselves to Israel as ambassadors from a distant country and Israel entered into a treaty with them before consulting with God. When Joshua discovered he was deceived he honored the letter of the treaty by allowing them to live but relegated them to woodcutters and water bearers. Saul years later attempted to eliminate them and the only a few survived. It is these survivors David addresses in the following verses.

<sup>2</sup> The king summoned the Gibeonites and spoke to them. (Now the Gibeonites were not a part of Israel but were survivors of the Amorites; the Israelites had sworn to spare them, but Saul in his zeal for Israel and Judah had tried to annihilate them.) <sup>3</sup> David asked the Gibeonites, “What shall I do for you? How shall I make amends so that you will bless the Lord’s inheritance?”

<sup>4</sup> The Gibeonites answered him, “We have no right to demand silver or gold from Saul or his family, nor do we have the right to put anyone in Israel to death.”

“What do you want me to do for you?” David asked.

<sup>5</sup> They answered the king, “As for the man who destroyed us and plotted against us so that we have been decimated and have no place anywhere in Israel, <sup>6</sup> let seven of his male descendants be given to us to be killed and exposed before the Lord at Gibeah of Saul—the Lord’s chosen one.”

So the king said, “I will give them to you.”

<sup>7</sup> The king spared Mephibosheth son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, because of the oath before the Lord between David and

Jonathan son of Saul. <sup>8</sup> But the king took Armoni and Mephibosheth, the two sons of Aiah's daughter Rizpah, whom she had borne to Saul, together with the five sons of Saul's daughter Merab, whom she had borne to Adriel son of Barzillai the Meholathite. <sup>9</sup> He handed them over to the Gibeonites, who killed and exposed them on a hill before the Lord. All seven of them fell together; they were put to death during the first days of the harvest, just as the barley harvest was beginning.

<sup>10</sup> Rizpah daughter of Aiah took sackcloth and spread it out for herself on a rock. From the beginning of the harvest till the rain poured down from the heavens on the bodies, she did not let the birds of the air touch them by day or the wild animals by night.

Thoughts?

The study guide draws several lessons from this story – let's examine this story, the suggested lessons and see if we can learn something useful.

The first lesson suggested by the study guide is in the last paragraph of Tuesday's lesson, "God expects us to honor our promises."

Thoughts? If we make a promise should we honor it? In all circumstances?

Is a promise different than an agreement, a contract, a vow, a covenant, or are they all basically the same, if we give our word to do something we should do it? In any and all circumstance?

Did Balaam agree to curse Israel? But God wouldn't let him keep his word – why not?

How about if you have given your life to God, you have surrendered to Him and promised to be faithful to Him and His kingdom and sometime later someone deceives you into making a promise that would violate your promise to God – what do you do?

What about Jephthah found in Hebrews hall of faith:

And Jephthah made a vow to the Lord: “If you give the Ammonites into my hands, <sup>31</sup> whatever comes out of the door of my house to meet me when I return in triumph from the Ammonites will be the Lord’s, and I will sacrifice it as a burnt offering.”

<sup>32</sup> Then Jephthah went over to fight the Ammonites, and the Lord gave them into his hands. <sup>33</sup> He devastated twenty towns from Aroer to the vicinity of Minnith, as far as Abel Keramim. Thus Israel subdued Ammon.

<sup>34</sup> When Jephthah returned to his home in Mizpah, who should come out to meet him but his daughter, dancing to the sound of tambourines! She was an only child. Except for her he had neither son nor daughter. <sup>35</sup> When he saw her, he tore his clothes and cried, “Oh! My daughter! You have made me miserable and wretched, because I have made a vow to the Lord that I cannot break.”

<sup>36</sup> “My father,” she replied, “you have given your word to the Lord. Do to me just as you promised, now that the Lord has avenged you of your enemies, the Ammonites. <sup>37</sup> But grant me this one request,” she said. “Give me two months to roam the hills and weep with my friends, because I will never marry.”

<sup>38</sup> “You may go,” he said. And he let her go for two months. She and the girls went into the hills and wept because she would never marry. <sup>39</sup> After the two months, she returned to her father and he did to her as he had vowed. And she was a virgin. Judges 11:30-39

Should Jephthah have sacrificed his daughter as a burnt offering?  
Do you think God was pleased?

What if your teenager made a suicide pact with some of their friends, should they say, well mom/dad, I realize I shouldn’t have made the promise, and I really don’t want to do it anymore, but since I did make the promise I am going to meet the others and kill myself?

EGW comments on the Gibeonites and the promise made:



Great was the indignation of the Israelites as they learned the deception that had been practiced upon them. And this was heightened when, after three days' journey, they reached the cities of the Gibeonites, near the center of the land. "All the congregation murmured against the princes;" but the latter refused to break the treaty, though secured by fraud, because they had "sworn unto them by the Lord God of Israel." "And the children of Israel smote them not." The Gibeonites had pledged themselves to renounce idolatry, and accept the worship of Jehovah; and **the preservation of their lives was not a violation of God's command to destroy the idolatrous Canaanites. Hence the Hebrews had not by their oath pledged themselves to commit sin.** And though the oath had been secured by deception, it was not to be disregarded. **The obligation to which one's word is pledged--if it do not bind him to perform a wrong act--should be held sacred.** No consideration of gain, of revenge, or of self-interest can in any way affect the inviolability of an oath or pledge. "Lying lips are abomination to the Lord." Proverbs 12:22. He that "shall ascend into the hill of the Lord," and "stand in His holy place," is "he that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not." Psalms 24:3; 15:4. {PP 506.1}

How do we understand stories like the sacrifice of Saul's 7 sons and Jephthah's daughter?

Read bottom pink section, "Though we don't..."

The lesson is correct that behavior has consequences, but is there any direct connection between Saul's action and a famine, like there is with not brushing your teeth and cavities? Is the idea we should take that the problem with sin is that God will inflict punishment? That the only problem is that God acts to cause consequences?

WEDNESDAY

Read top paragraph, "David consents..." thoughts?

Is this a valid idea of Biblical atonement? Is the lesson trying to suggest that this is somehow related to God's plan of salvation by connecting the word used by David with the sanctuary service – what do you think?

If we go down this trail of thinking could it lead us to conclude that it is through human sacrifice that “atonement” is achieved and God needed a perfect human sacrifice to pay for the crimes of human sin and therefore, just as the Gibeonites executed the sons of Saul, God executed His Son to satisfy divine justice?

“Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, *yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.*” (vs 4).

**February 2007 Woodrow Whidden:** “Why did God the Father choose a cross to be the instrument of death? Why did He not choose to have Christ instantly beheaded or quickly run through with a spear or sword? Was God unjust in executing judgment on Christ with a cross when He could have done it by beheading, a noose, a sword, a gas chamber, a bolt of lightning, or a lethal injection?”

(<http://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2007/February/sinner-s-in-the-hands-of-god.html>).

In December 2007 World Review “One of the fundamental problems of the Moral Influence Theory is that it rejects the substitutionary nature of Christ's death. The idea that **God had to kill the innocent** instead of the guilty in order to save us is considered a violation of justice.” (p 40, emphasis mine).

Thoughts? Do you think God killed His Son on the cross? What evidence do we have beside Isaiah's prophecy that we would misunderstand and think it was God who did it?

“My God, My God, why have you forsaken me.” Matt 27:46.

What is Jesus testimony as to what God did to Him? Did God exercise His might to execute His Son?

Consider EGW's statement:

Satan saw that his disguise was torn away. His administration was laid open before the unfallen angels and before the heavenly universe. **He had revealed himself as a murderer. By shedding the blood of the Son of God, he had uprooted himself from the sympathies of the heavenly beings.** Henceforth his work was restricted. Whatever attitude he might assume, he could no longer await the angels as they came from the heavenly courts, and before them accuse Christ's brethren of being clothed with the garments of blackness and the defilement of sin. The last link of sympathy between Satan and the heavenly world was broken. {DA 761.2}

Who does EGW said killed Christ? And when this was understood by the heavenly intelligences what impact did it have on them? And who do you think would be behind the idea that God is the one who killed His Son? And what impact does it have on us to believe God is the one who killed His Son?

The idea that God requires some arbitrary death penalty of a substitute innocent in order to satisfy some bloodlust, some sense of justice is part of human misconceptions about justice and goes all the way back to pagan god concepts and practices. Satan constantly works to project His character onto God and all too often we have accepted his distortions.

Why the Hebrew word David used is the same as that in the sanctuary service is because atonement means to bring two warring parties together, to reconcile, to make one. In the case of the Gibeonites what *they* required to be reconciled was the death of the seven sons. But, what is required for mankind to be one with God again?

Was the death of Christ a requirement – Absolutely – but why? Was it for the same reasons as the Gibeonites? Was it because the wronged party, God, required someone to die so His sense of justice would be appeased? Absolutely NOT!

The death of Christ was required as the only means whereby God could destroy Satan and his power, destroy death, and destroy the devil's work of defacing God's image in man and replacing it with Satan's image. (Heb 2:14, 1Tim 1:10, 1John 3:8, LHM 49).

In other words Christ death was required to remedy the sin situation and restore mankind fully back into harmony with God, to actually fix in man what sin had destroyed.

The dark section states, "How are we to understand this passage? Or can we understand it? In what ways is this an example of something in Scripture that we can't fully explain but that we simply need to trust the Lord on?"

Thoughts about this? What is the study guide suggesting? Is it encouraging us to search for answers?

Can we understand this story? Yes! It has to do with the people.

First, do we accept that the famine was somehow God's direct act, or rather that the author of scripture attributed it to God that which He did not prevent, as we read about a few weeks ago?

When the word came to David that this was a result of Saul's actions toward the Gibeonites, did David seek God's solution to the problem or did David seek the Gibeonites for solution?

Are we surprised that the Gibeonites wanted human sacrifice? Where in the text do we find God supporting this? Where do we find God instructing it? Where do we find God endorsing it?

Or do we find God working with humans, where those humans were in their understanding and developmental level?

Don't you think God was sickened by what the Gibeonites wanted and how this played out?

Do you remember how reconciliation occurred when the Assyrians surrounded Elisha? What happened? They were struck blind and Elisha led them into the midst of Israel and the king of Israel wanted to kill them but Elisha instructed them to through a feast for the Assyrians and then release them.

Do you think if they had sought the Lord He could have found another solution?

Our heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us of which we know nothing. Those who accept the one principle of making the service of God supreme, will find perplexities vanish and a plain path before their feet. {MH 481.2}

#### THURSDAY

Last paragraph first few sentences state, “The famine does not end after the seven descendents of Saul are executed. God responds to the plea for the land only after David has provided a respectable resting place for the remains of Saul and his descendants. In other words, although justice and righteousness are important elements of our interactions with one another, reconciliation is required as well.”

Thoughts? What do you think about the idea of justice and righteousness? Are these two separate things? In scripture the word translated justice is the word translated righteous or righteousness. Thus we read in Romans 1:17:

- For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.” NIV
- For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “*The just shall live by faith.*” NKJV

Do we see why Paul said in Romans,

Let God be true, and every man a liar. As it is written:

“So that you may be proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge.”

The issue is about God – how do you see Him? How do we understand the stories of the OT. What more could God do when dealing with people who are so darkened in mind, but patient meet them where they were and slowly lead them to greater light?

FRIDAY

Read and discuss questions 2,4 and 5